

[No. 21.]

REPORT of the Committee on Agriculture.

The committee on agriculture and the mechanic arts, to whom was referred so much of the Governor's message as relates to the State Agricultural College, have given attention to the subject, and respectfully submit the following report:

Your committee believe that the State Agricultural College, as it now exists, presents a marked and favorable contrast with its past condition up to a late period. The early demands upon the treasury of the State were large, while the College was acknowledged to be an experiment without a settled policy.

The College was for some years largely in debt to individuals, in small amounts. The Institution is now managed virtually upon the cash system, its plans for the year are well matured, and its demands comparatively moderate. At a former period a different policy prevailed. Instead of being expended in much-needed improvements, several thousands of dollars were suffered virtually to return to the treasury of the State. Within the past few years the appropriation has been expended annually, the fields have to some extent been brought into condition to be cultivated with the higher class of implements, and

barns have been erected, stock purchased, and the means of usefulness in many ways extended. The marks of improvement at the College are everywhere manifest.

The workings of the Institution have been very much modified during the last two years. It may not, perhaps, be too much to say that it has now become an Agricultural College for the first time. Heretofore there seems to have been several departments quite independent of each other. The management of the farm, and of the labor of the students, had no connection with the instruction given in the College. They were different and often conflicting interests. These have all been brought into systematic relations with each other, and a proper unity infused into the Institution. Much more of the instruction is practical and professional than was formerly so, and a large part of the appropriations is expended upon the farm and stock, and like means of illustration.

We find the College, also, now for the first time completely organized. For four years it was without any presiding officer, and until the past season it has had no secretary. Its faculty was rendered complete by the election to the secretaryship of Mr. Sanford Howard, a gentleman well known as an agricultural writer, as a selector of stock in England for importation, and as having charge of a department in the Yale Agricultural course of lectures. The College is now organized with a president and secretary, with a board and faculty all working harmoniously to carry out the plans that they have matured.

In view of these changes, we believe that old prejudices against the College should give place to confidence in it. According to the messages delivered to the Legislature at the opening of the session, it is the opinion of the present Executive, as well as of the late Governor, that these prejudices are fast disappearing. Such is our own conviction.

The tone of the newspapers of the State, and the conversation of intelligent farmers and educated men respecting it, are

far more favorable than formerly. The donations of stock and other things to the College disclose the same fact.

Your committee are convinced that this return of confidence is warranted, and is the result of the good management of the present Board of Control—the State Board of Agriculture.

Your committee have no fear that the Institution will lack students, provided the public can be assured of its stability, and that it possesses a fixed policy of action. It is not strange that young men are unwilling to enter upon a course of study in a College whose continued existence is frequently a subject of debate. The length of the course has been three times changed—once by being cut down from four to two years, the higher classes in the College being dispersed without graduating.

Every two years, at least, the continued life of the College is brought in question, with results very detrimental to its interests. All such action bring discredit on the Institution, and being disseminated and perhaps assisted by the newspapers of the State, deters many from availing themselves of its advantages. Two years ago such a discussion proved disastrous in the extreme. The College opened three weeks before the appropriation was made, or the debate on removing the College came to an end. In such circumstances, it is impossible to hold students to the College.

The College rolls show that it has received students from thirty-five of the counties of the State. There is no county, any part of which is south of the Detroit and Milwaukee railroad, which has not been represented. They have come from ten counties north of that line, and several have been in attendance of late from without the limits of the State. We believe the College only needs to be known, in its new organization, to make its good influences felt in every part of the State. Your committee think it not out of place in this connection to refer to the late action of the executive committee of the State Agricultural Society. Although their petition for a removal of the

College has not come before the Legislature, it has been made public through the reporters for the press.

It must be remembered that the State Agricultural Society has no official or legal connection with the Agricultural College, which has a board of control of its own, responsible for its management to the State.

It must also be remembered that the action referred to was not the action of the State Agricultural Society, for the Society as such, were not consulted, and had no voice in the matter. Under these circumstances the petition is entitled to exactly the same weight as the petition of so many other private men of like intelligence—and *no more*.

The members of this committee, who were in attendance two years ago, passed a few hours at the College at that time. We cannot learn that they have visited it since, either as a committee or as individuals, until during their present session, when they made a like flying visit to the Institution. They seem, however, to be aware of the changed sentiment of the public towards the Institution, for in their resolutions and remarks they fully endorse its present officers and management. The only ground assigned for their remarkable petition is, that the location is inaccessible. They think now of removing the College to some southern town, after it has become rooted where it is, with a farm sufficiently cleared for the use of machinery, on lands of every variety known in the State except prairie, where students have reached it from every quarter of the State, on the simple ground of inaccessibility.

If this were not an absurd plea heretofore, certainly it is now, that the place is accessible from Grand Rapids and from Detroit by the railroad, and when it will soon be in like manner connected through Jackson with the entire range of counties traversed by the Michigan Central and the Michigan Southern Railroads.

No place in the State will be, on the completion of the railroad to Jackson, more accessible from every quarter, than Lansing.

It is not improbable that the Grand Trunk railroad may be extended through Lansing, at no distant time. In the other direction, certainly, the lately completed railroad communication between the Detroit & Milwaukee railroad, and the Saginaw Valley, brings the College within reach of that rapidly developing region.

We have reason to know that the action of the executive committee is not approved by the State Board of Agriculture, which has the College in charge.

The Hon. S. S. Lacey, agent for the selection of the lands granted the State, by act of Congress, approved July 2d, 1862, for the endowment of colleges for the benefit of agriculture and the mechanic arts, in an appendix to the annual report of the State Land Office, for the year 1864, states the progress that has been made in the selection of these lands. One hundred and fifty thousand acres "have been selected with reference to their intrinsic value and early availability for the purposes of the grant, and have consequently been made adjacent to the settled portions of the State, and within reach of some of the most important lines of State roads now in process of construction."

By an act of the Legislature of this State, approved March 18th, 1863, the annual interest arising from the fund accruing from the sale of these lands, "shall be regularly applied, under the direction of the State Board of Agriculture, to the endowment, support and maintenance of the State Agricultural College." As the lands granted to the States were proportioned to the representation in Congress, the neighboring States of Indiana, Illinois and Ohio may, if they will, realize much larger funds for the endowment of an agricultural college than Michigan will be able to do. Still the means to be derived from the grant, if well managed should be sufficient to support such an institution as should be of inestimable value to the State.

It will, however, in the meantime, be necessary to make appropriation for the support of the College. We find the amount of warrants drawn during the years 1863 and 1864, to amount

to \$26,494. About one thousand dollars of the past expenses of the College remain to be paid from the appropriation for the next two years. The College commenced the last two years with a balance of more than four thousand dollars, exclusive of the swamp land sales fund—a balance unexpectedly large to the Board of Agriculture itself, but which, from the increased prices of every material, was found to be needed before the close of the two years. It is the policy of the board to mature some plans annually for the growth of the College, keeping easily within the compass of their means, and then to see that they are well carried out. In this way the growth of the Institution will be sure and constant.

Your committee believe that the Board are practicing the strictest economy consistent with the best interests of the State. We believe that \$15,000 will be required for each of the two years, 1865 and 1866, in order to carry on the Institution with credit to the State.

They have therefore instructed me to submit the accompanying bill, entitled

A bill making appropriation for the support of the State Agricultural College, and to pay the expenses of the State Board of Agriculture, providing for such support, and the payment of such expenses,

And recommend that the bill do pass, and ask to be discharged from the further consideration of the subject.

S. F. BROWN, *Chairman*.